

Amendments to the Drawings

The attached sheet of drawings includes changes to Fig. 7. This sheet, which includes Figs. 6 and 7, replaces the original sheet including Figs. 6 and 7.

Attachment: Replacement Sheet 6/17

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Customer No. 24574

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REMARKS

Applicants have amended claims 13, 14, 17, 23, 34, 35, 38 and 44. Accordingly, claims 13-14, 17, 19-20, 23-26, 31-35, 38, 40, 44-47 and 52-54 are currently pending in this patent application. Applicants now address each and every point raised by the Examiner in the above-noted Office action as follows:

I. Objection to the Drawings

The Examiner objected to the drawings because reference character "152" was used to designate both a bearing feature in Figure 7 and a blade propeller-like feature in Figure 3. Applicant has amended Figure 7 to change reference character "152" to "155" to be consistent with the use of "155" to denote the bearing feature in the specification. Applicant submits herewith Replacement Sheet 6/17 which contains the amended Figure 7.

II. Objection to the Specification

The Examiner has objected to the specification because feature "152" is discussed in the specification as being both a washer and a blade. Applicant has amended the specification to use reference character "155" for all discussion of the washer. Therefore reference character "152" denotes the blade and reference character "155" denotes the washer. In view thereof, Applicant respectfully requests that the objection to the specification be reconsidered and withdrawn.

III. Claims Rejected Under Section 112

The Examiner has rejected claims 13, 14, 17, 19, 23-26, 31-35, 38, 40, 44-47 and 52-54 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as allegedly being indefinite for failing to

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particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. The Examiner alleges that claims 13 and 34 are vague and indefinite because it is unclear what structure the first and second plates take. The Examiner alleges that it is unclear how merely a plate can be used in the manner claimed and that the specification does not provide support for plates with the thrust bearing, but rather teaches a stainless steel washer and a plastic bearing washer.

Applicants respectfully disagree. However, solely to speed up prosecution, "plate" has been amended to recite "washer" in each of the claims. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that the § 112, second paragraph, rejection be withdrawn.

IV. Claims Rejected Under Section 102

The Examiner has rejected Claims 34-35, 45-47 and 52-54 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by Williams. The Examiner alleges that part 78 of Williams anticipates the first plate of the present claims. Applicant respectfully disagrees as part 78 of Williams is described in the specification as a drive socket. However, to further distinguish the present invention from Williams, claim 34 has been amended to recite "the first washer having a first inner diameter and a second inner diameter and being removably attached to the auger screw by a projection extending from the second inner diameter of the first washer." See Fig. 7. Part 78 of Williams does not have two different inner diameters, let alone a projection extending from one of the inner diameters. Accordingly, claim 34 patentably distinguishes over Williams.

Claims 35, 45-47 and 52-54 depend from claim 34 and are therefore patentable for the reasons set forth above.

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Accordingly, applicants respectfully request the withdrawal of the § 102 rejection.

V. Claims Rejected Under Section 103

The Examiner has rejected Claims 13-14, 24-25 and 31-33 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Williams. Once again, the Examiner alleges that part 78 of Williams anticipates the first plate of the present claims. Applicant respectfully disagrees as part 78 of Williams is described in the specification as a drive socket. However, to further distinguish the present invention from Williams, claim 13 has been amended to recite "the first washer having an annular portion and a flange portion that extends away from the annular portion, which can be deformed to be snapped on and partially surround the auger screw." See Fig. 7. Part 78 of Williams does not have an annular portion and a flange portion that extends from the annular portion. Nor is such a construction taught or suggested in Williams. Accordingly, claim 13 patentably distinguishes over Williams.

Claims 14, 24-25 and 31-33 depend from claim 13 and are therefore patentable for the reasons set forth above.

Accordingly, applicants respectfully request the withdrawal of the § 103 rejection.

It is believed that all claims now pending patentably define the subject invention over the prior art of record and are in condition for allowance and such action is earnestly solicited at the earliest possible date.

VI. Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants thank the Examiner for indicating that patentable subject matter is present in claims 17, 19, 38 and 40.

VII. Reference of Interest

The Examiner cites Peterson (6,251,147) to show the state of the art. The Examiner points out that Peterson states that the rotatable plate (bearing) is welded to the screw. The Examiner alleges that prior to welding the two pieces must have been separate and must have been fit onto one another, as broadly claimed such fitting reads on snapped on. Applicants respectfully disagree. Those skilled in the art would clearly understand that in order for a first part to be "snapped on" to a second part, the first part would have to be deformed in some way so that it can be fit on to the second part. When the first part is snapped on it is deformed from its original shape and then "snaps" into place and back into its original shape. It is respectfully submitted that the act of fitting and then welding two parts together in Peterson does not read on "snapped." Moreover, it is respectfully submitted that Williams also does not teach or suggest a snapping together of the alleged first plate and auger screw.

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VIII. Request for Telephone Conference

If, after considering this Amendment, the Examiner believes that any of the pending claims are not properly allowable, Applicants request that the Examiner please contact their authorized representative identified below by phone prior to issuing any further Office action for the purpose of hopefully resolving any such issue.

Please charge our Deposit Account No. 10-0440 if any additional fees are necessary for this matter.

Respectfully submitted,

JEFFER, MANGELS, BUTLER & MARMARO LLP

Dated: 7/5, 2006

By: Grant T. Langton, Esq.
Reg. No. 39,739
1900 Avenue of the Stars
Seventh Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90067-4308
(310) 203-8080
CUSTOMER NO. 24,574

GTL/BCS

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